

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

7,011.11 ▼74.41 PTS. ▼1.05%

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BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P828.50 -P19.50 -2.30%	ACEN AC Energy Corp. P9.33 -P0.32 -3.32%	AEO Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P56.70 ---	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P11.52 +P0.02 +0.17%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P33.85 -P1.05 -3.01%	AP Aboitiz Power Corp. P29.30 -P0.45 -1.51%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P123.00 ---	BLOOM Blossberry Resorts Corp. P6.14 +P0.08 +1.32%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P92.50 -P0.30 -0.32%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P31.15 -P0.05 -0.16%
GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P3,270.00 +P10.00 +0.31%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P526.50 -P9.50 -1.77%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P194.00 +P0.50 +0.26%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P215.00 -P1.80 -0.83%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P56.20 -P0.10 -0.18%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P9.66 -P0.12 -1.23%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P53.50 ---	MEG Megaworld Corp. P3.10 -P0.01 -0.32%	MER Manila Electric Co. P306.00 +P1.00 +0.33%	MPI Metro Pacific Investments Corp. P3.85 ---
PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P36.60 -P1.75 -4.56%	RLC Robinsons Land Corp. P17.96 -P0.02 -0.11%	RRHI Robinsons Retail Holdings, Inc. P54.50 -P3.50 -6.03%	SECB Security Bank Corp. P104.10 -P4.90 -4.50%	SM SM Investments Corp. P937.00 -P10.00 -1.06%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P112.80 ---	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P33.10 -P0.40 -1.19%	TEL PLDT, Inc. P1,850.00 -P26.00 -1.39%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P126.80 -P2.20 -1.71%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P30.00 -P0.20 -0.66%

NLEX Corp. unveils expansion plans for 2022

NLEX Corp. plans to start this year the construction of a two-kilometer expressway section between the existing Mindanao Avenue toll plaza and Quirino Highway in Novaliches, Quezon City, the company's top official said.

The company also intends to start work on the third bridge at Candaba Viaduct.

"[W]e welcome 2022 with optimism as there are big-ticket projects that we will complete and commence this year," NLEX Corp. President and General Manager J. Luigi L. Bautista said in an e-mailed statement over the weekend.

He was referring to the NLEX C5 Link Mindanao Avenue-Quirino Highway Section, the Candaba Third Viaduct, and the NLEX Connector.

The NLEX C5 Link Mindanao Avenue-Quirino Highway Section is "part of the 11.5-kilometer NLEX C5 Link between Mindanao Avenue, Quirino Highway, Regalado Avenue, Congressional Avenue and C.P. Garcia Avenue in Quezon City," the company said.

The project is expected to cut travel time between Mindanao Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue to 10 minutes from the usual 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, the planned third bridge at Candaba Viaduct will "expand its capacity from three lanes to four lanes per direction, enhancing the mobility and safety of motorists," NLEX Corp. said.

"The eight-kilometer NLEX Connector that passes through 5th Avenue/C3 Road, España Boulevard all the way to Sta. Mesa, Manila is targeted for completion this year," it added.

The company recently signed an agreement with China Road and Bridges Corp. for the civil works contract of the remaining three kilometers of its connector project in Manila. The project is between the

future España and Sta. Mesa interchanges, the second section of the eight-kilometer NLEX Connector.

"This elevated expressway will provide supply chain and logistics sector with a more efficient route, bypassing busy roads such as EDSA and C5," NLEX Corp. said.

The company also said it completed 12 projects on North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) - Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX) last year.

"Among the major projects completed last year were the expansion of Subic Freeport Expressway (SFEX), upgrade of link slabs at Candaba Viaduct South-

bound, and the rehabilitation of Meycauayan and Bigaa bridges in Bulacan," it noted.

The company added that it also completed some upgrades in its toll collection system, including the installation of radio-frequency identification (RFID) early detection features on 56 toll lanes. "With this project, the enhanced RFID scanners can detect up to three vehicles in advance for quick processing of toll lane transactions."

It also equipped the Balintawak, Mindanao, Karuhatan, Paso de Blas, and Tarlac toll plazas with automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) system. "It is being

used to match RFID transactions, improve safety, and enforce traffic laws," the company said.

NLEX Corp. is part of Metro Pacific Tollways Corp., the tollway unit of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC).

MPIC is one of three key Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT, Inc. Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary Media-Quest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

New surge in virus cases sees shorter market lines

SUPERMARKETS in Metro Manila have seen fewer customers following the surge in coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, according to the Philippine Amalgamated Supermarkets Association, Inc. (Pagasa).

Pagasa President Steven T. Cua said via mobile phone message that supermarkets, whether stand-alone or within a mall, have seen fewer buyers despite the increase in virus cases, worsened by the Omicron variant.

"People have shunned leaving their homes because of the surge in daily infections," Mr. Cua said, adding that there was also "a little uptick in online shopping."

Metro Manila has been placed under the stricter Alert Level 3 from Jan. 3 to 15 amid the spike in COVID-19 cases.

New infections reached 28,707 on Jan. 9, bringing the total COVID-19 cases in the country to 2.97 million. Active cases stood at 128,114.

Mr. Cua said foot traffic across supermarkets remained "pale" despite recommendations from various experts for the implementation of Alert Level 4 in the Philippine capital.

The higher alert level means greater mobility restrictions, but its "anticipated announcement... looming in the horizon" did not cause heavy foot traffic, he said.

"Also, January is normally a month not associated with an uptick in household buying," Mr. Cua said.

According to Mr. Cua, some supermarkets saw increased sales and demand during the recent holiday season due to bulk purchases made for Typhoon Odette relief efforts.

"Demand for relief goods centered on easy-open canned goods like meat loaf, sardines, beef loaf, corned beef, and the like; ready-to-eat from the can," he said.

However, Mr. Cua said queues at supermarkets have already transferred to drugstores and swab test centers.

"Supply of commonly bought medicines for colds and flu [is] running out

everywhere, same with antigen test sets, as people experience bouts with the common cold due to the weather," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cua said he is "cautiously optimistic" for the performance of the supermarket industry in 2022 despite the surge in COVID-19 cases and the detection of the Omicron variant in the country.

"There have been uplifting comments from medical authorities that the Omicron variant (a milder version of COVID-19) might be the start of the end of this pandemic. For no better indication of what is to come in the meantime, I guess we should all hold on to that," Mr. Cua said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

PSE names 65 Shari'ah-compliant firms, adds nine new issues in list

SHARI'AH-COMPLIANT firms at the Philippine Stock Exchange, Inc. (PSE) increased to 65 from 62 previously after the local bourse operator's latest quarterly screening for the period ending Dec. 25, 2021.

According to a circular published on the PSE website, six issues were removed from the list and nine new firms were deemed Shari'ah-compliant.

The PSE assigned Ideal Ratings, Inc. to screen listed firms in accordance with the Shari'ah compliance standards of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Finance Institutions, which includes a business and financial ratios screening.

This quarterly review of the local bourse aims to make investing in the stock market more accessible for Muslims in the Philippines and abroad.

The nine new Shari'ah-compliant issues are ACE Enxor, Inc., Benguet Corp. "A," Benguet Corp. "B," MREIT, Inc., NiHAO Mineral Resources International, Inc., Oriental Peninsula Resources Group, Inc., Premiere Horizon Alliance Corp., Primex Corp., and RL Commercial REIT, Inc.

Meanwhile, Concepcion Industrial Corp., Del Monte Pacific, Ltd., Island Information & Technology, Inc., Marcventures Holdings, Inc., PAL Holdings, Inc., and United Paragon Mining Corp. were removed from the latest list. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

OUTLIER

Globe dips after surge in coronavirus cases

RENEWED movement restrictions as the country sees a spike in new coronavirus infections derailed market sentiment last week that affected local stocks including Globe Telecom, Inc.

Analysts point to the surging coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases as what dragged the stocks to fall across the market on the first trading week of the year, including Globe Telecom, Inc.

Data from the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) showed 164,780 Globe shares worth P537.70 million were traded from Jan. 3 to 7. The PSE canceled trading on Jan. 4 due to technical problems in the bourse's trading engine.

Shares in the Ayala-led telecommunications company ended the year down by 1.6% to P3,270 apiece on Friday from its P3,322 finish on Dec. 31, 2021. Compared with the first trading day on Jan. 3, Globe shares inched down by 0.2%.

Regina Capital Development Corp. Equity Analyst Anna Corenne M. Agravo said that investors are "slightly anxious" with the possibility of putting Metro Manila in a higher alert level.

"Therefore, there weren't any significant movements in GLO's share price as the market was taking a wait-and-see stance," she said in an e-mail interview, referring to the ticker symbol of Globe. In a separate e-mail interview, Philippine

National Bank (PNB) Senior Equity Research Analyst Jonathan J. Latuja shared the same sentiment, adding that the anticipation of renewed lockdowns "may dampen the country's reopening momentum."

"I believe this anxiety is observed across all segments and not just the telco sector or Globe," he added.

New cases of the coronavirus disease 2019 started increasing on the last days of 2021 as the more transmissible Omicron variant started to spread in the country.

Metro Manila and other areas are currently under Alert Level 3 until Jan. 15 to curb the spike of new COVID-19 infections. More movement restrictions and lower operating capacity up to 30% for some commercial establishments were put in place.

Total COVID-19 cases in the country reached 2.97 million after recording 28,707 new infections on Jan. 9. Active cases stood at 128,114.

Meanwhile, Globe said on last Thursday that COVID-19 experimental drug molnupiravir is now available to prescribe via its HealthNow app.

HealthNow app — developed by Ayala Healthcare Holdings, Inc. (AC Health) and Globe's 917Ventures — is a mobile application that helps patients consult with a doctor virtually and offers delivery of medicines and scheduling appointments while at home. — **Bernadette Therese M. Gadon**

FULL STORY



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SEC clears Investree Philippines' permanent crowdfunding license

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has given Investree Philippines, Inc. a permanent license to operate as a funding portal and act as a crowdfunding intermediary after a review of the company's operations.

"The grant of the permanent license is part of the Commission's efforts to promote crowdfunding as a suitable investment among Filipino investors and to provide more fundraising options for SMEs (small and medium enterprises)," the SEC said in a statement.

Investree Philippines is a joint venture of Filinvest Development Corp. and Investree Singapore Pte. Ltd. It was granted a provisional license last year on Jan. 7.

It is said to be the first crowdfunding intermediary and funding portal registered with the commission, following the effectivity of the Rules and Regulations Covering Crowdfunding (CF Rules) in July 2019.

The SEC describes crowdfunding as a "fund-raising activity typically conducted

through an online platform for startups and [SMEs]." Crowdfunding would involve the entrepreneur or the project initiator, those who will support and fund the business, and the moderating organization.

Crowdfunding activities that involve lending or are equity-based entail offering securities in the form of debentures or shares. Under the Securities Regulation Code, entities cannot just offer for sale or distribute securities without a registration statement filed and approved by the SEC.

The commission said crowdfunding securities may be exempted from registration "provided that the issuer, intermediary, and investors comply with the CF Rules."

Investree Philippines' crowdfunding portal has 43 issuers and one investor with 110 notes issued for a total P172.15 million as of Dec. 20, 2021. It also had three investors, which include Investree Singapore, Andremere Holding Corp., and Netbank (A Rural Bank), Inc. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

Higher industry tier class sought for energy efficiency projects

ENTITIES involved in energy efficiency (EE) projects have again called on government agencies involved in classifying projects for fiscal and other incentives to review an industry tier system before issuing specific guidelines for the endorsement of investments that will receive these perks.

In its recap of what transpired during a public consultation for a draft Department of Energy (DoE) circular, the Philippine Energy Efficiency Alliance (PE2) said that the department and the Board of Investments "should first quickly exhaust all opportunities within its policy mandate to reclassify all EE projects" as a Tier III economic activity.

Tier III projects are considered "critical to the structural transformation of the economy." Among others, Tier III

projects are granted a longer income tax holiday and enhanced deductions.

PE2 said the reclassification to Tier III from Tier I — or projects that are said to be "essential support to sectors critical to industrial development" — should be regardless of whether they are strategic or not.

It said the re-classification to Tier III economic activity would attract private sector investments.

"If the Tier III re-classification can immediately blanket all EE projects, 'strategic' or otherwise, then the requirement for separate endorsement guidelines for 'strategic' EE investments may no longer be required," PE2 said.

"The energy efficiency sector is hoping that government policies enable the market to mobilize significant

capital flows in the first decade along the 2040 pathway of bridging the P12-trillion energy efficiency capital gap," PE2 President Alexander D. Ablaza told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message.

Mr. Ablaza added that all sectors should work together to ensure that policies do not restrict capital flows given that the contribution of energy efficiency in the country's clean energy transition is seen to be larger than that of renewable energy.

The alliance earlier said that the reclassification of EE projects from Tier I to Tier III is important to the structural transformation and industrial revolution of the economy.

In case a separate endorsement guideline is required, Mr. Ablaza recommended during the virtual meeting with the DoE on Dec. 22 that the proposed

circular should shift the focus on the investing company to benefit from the incentives instead of the authorized person or entity with legal rights that is responsible for implementing the project, as stated in the initial draft.

Among the recommendations is the improvement of the language of the draft to make it accommodative to business model and investment innovations or new host entity or end user classes aside from innovative technologies. — **Marielle C. Luceno**

FULL STORY



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